

What is claimed is:

1. A method of managing contacts within a contact centre, comprising the steps of:
  - assigning to a received contact a priority and a skillset identifier, whereby
  - 5 the contact can be prioritised relative to other contacts;
  - creating a software object for said contact;
  - determining a queuing position for said object relative to at least one other object representing a contact having a similar skillset identifier; and
  - adding to said object a reference to said at least one other object,
  - 10 whereby a collection of such objects each containing a reference to at least one other object provides a prioritised queue for a skillset.
2. A method as claimed in claim 1, wherein said object includes references to two other objects having a similar skillset identifier, said two other objects
  - 15 representing the contacts immediately ahead of and behind it within a queue, except in the case in which the newly created object is positioned at an end of a queue.
3. A method as claimed in claim 1, further comprising the step of modifying
  - 20 said at least one other object with a reference to the newly created object.
4. A method as claimed in claim 1, wherein the received contact is assigned multiple skillset identifiers, and the step of adding a reference comprises adding separate references to objects in different queues.
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5. A method as claimed in claim 1, further comprising the step of responding to a network request by sending over the network details of those objects at the head of a queue matching criteria specified in the request.

6. A method as claimed in claim 1, wherein the objects are created and maintained by a contact manager, and a queuing module carries out said determination of said queuing position according to information associated with the new object, the queuing module being further capable of adding said reference  
5 to said object.

7. A method as claimed in claim 6, wherein the contact manager has a memory space in which objects are stored, and the queuing module has a memory space in which objects are updated, and said memory spaces either form part of a  
10 common space or a replication service is provided to update changes to an object effected in one of the memory spaces with corresponding changes to a copy of the object in the other of the memory spaces.

8. A method of distributing contacts across a network of contact centres,  
15 wherein each contact is represented by a software object maintained at a contact centre, each said software object containing references to one or more other software objects maintained at the same contact centre to provide a queue of objects at each contact centre, wherein the method comprises:  
upon a network resource having the capability of handling contacts with  
20 certain criteria becoming available, requesting from each contact centre the highest priority queued object matching said criteria;  
receiving information relating to each such highest priority queued object from said contact centres;  
determining which object represents the contact with the highest priority  
25 and/or best match for the available resource; and  
issuing routing instructions to cause said contact to be routed to the resource.

9. A method as claimed in claim 8, wherein the contact centre which  
30 maintained the object representing the selected contact carries out the further step

of removing the selected object from its queue and updating those objects which contain references to the selected object, to thereby update the top of one or more queues represented at that contact centre by a collection of objects.

- 5     10.     A method of distributing contacts across a network of contact centres, wherein each contact is represented by a software object maintained at a contact centre, each said software object containing references to one or more other software objects maintained at the same contact centre to provide a queue of objects at each contact centre, wherein the method comprises:

10             maintaining a network queue of contacts by automatically replicating changes in contact objects at each contact centre with corresponding changes in contact objects in said network queue;

              upon a network resource having the capability of handling contacts with certain criteria becoming available, determining from the network queue the

15     highest priority queued object matching said criteria; and

              issuing routing instructions to cause said contact to be routed to the resource.
- 20     11.     A computer program product comprising instructions in machine readable form which when executed in a computer system for managing contacts at a contact centre are effective to cause the computer system to:

              assign to a received contact a priority and a skillset identifier, whereby the contact can be prioritised relative to other contacts;

              create a software object for said contact;

25             determine a queuing position for said object relative to at least one other object representing a contact having a similar skillset identifier; and

              add to said object a reference to said at least one other object,

whereby a collection of such objects each containing a reference to at least one other object provides a prioritised queue for a skillset.

12. A computer program product comprising instructions in machine readable form which when executed in a computer system provided in a network of contact centres are effective to cause the computer system to:

upon a network resource having the capability of handling contacts with  
 5 certain criteria becoming available, request from each contact centre a highest priority queued object representing a contact queued at that contact centre which matches said criteria;

receive information relating to each such highest priority queued object from said contact centres;

10 determine which object represents the contact with the highest priority and/or best match for the available resource; and

issue routing instructions to cause said contact to be routed to the resource.

13. A system for managing contacts in a contact centre, the system  
 15 comprising:

a workflow processor for assigning to a received contact a priority and a skillset identifier, whereby the contact can be prioritised relative to other contacts;

an object creation module for creating a software object for said contact;

a queuing manager for determining a queuing position for said object  
 20 relative to at least one other object representing a contact having a similar skillset identifier; and

an object modification module for adding to said object a reference to said at least one other object,

whereby a collection of such objects each containing a reference to at least one  
 25 other object provides a prioritised queue for a skillset.

14. A system for distributing contacts across a network of contact centres, wherein each contact is represented by a software object maintained at a contact centre, each said software object containing references to one or more other

software objects maintained at the same contact centre to provide a queue of objects at each contact centre, wherein the system comprises:

5 a request generator for generating a request, upon a network resource having the capability of handling contacts with certain criteria becoming available, said request being effective to determine from each contact centre the highest priority queued object at that contact centre matching said criteria;

a network connection for forwarding said request to each contact centre and receiving therefrom information concerning the highest priority queued object at each contact centre matching said criteria;

10 comparison means for determining which object represents the contact with the highest priority and/or best match for the available resource; and

a routing instruction generator for issuing routing instructions to cause said contact to be routed to the resource.

15 15. A software object representing a contact at a contact centre, said object including a reference to one or more other such objects located immediately ahead of or behind said object in a queue, the object further comprising an identifier to the contact which it represents and a skillset identifier enabling it to be identified in a search for objects representing contacts which match given skillset criteria.

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16. A virtual queue of contacts, wherein each contact within the queue is represented by a software object including a reference to one or more other such objects located immediately ahead of or behind said object in a queue, the object further comprising an identifier to the contact which it represents and a skillset identifier enabling it to be identified in a search for objects representing contacts which match given skillset criteria, and wherein the order of contacts within the queue is determinable from the aggregated references between objects.

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